



An Anthropologist in Papua: The Photography of F.E. Williams, 1922-39

Julia; Young Clark

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A pictorial celebration of the work of the renowned ethnographer, F.E. Williams (1893-1943). Australian-born and Oxford-trained, he spent 20 years - the entirety of his working career - as Government Anthropologist in the Australian Territory of Papua, then ruled by the "benignly paternalistic" proconsul Sir Hubert Murray. One of the aims of this volume is to document, through Williams's photographs and, wherever possible, through his words, the sheer variety of his ethnographic discoveries and fieldwork experiences. Some 235 images have been selected. An introductory essay provides the biographical, historical and anthropological contexts of Williams's ethnographic and photographic achievement. These are important for a proper appreciation of his work: notably, the colonial milieu of Papua in the 1920s and 1930s; Williams's dealings with Murray (with whom he did not always see eye-to-eye); and his relationship with academic mentors such as Malinowski and R.R. Marett. Williams's commitment to applied anthropology partly eclipsed his scholarly achievements. His career was coterminous with the reign of functionalism in British social anthropology. This is a good part of his historical significance, because he was in a unique position to fulfil some of the prescriptions of Malinowski's revolution concerning intensive (and extended) fieldwork and "practical" anthropology. It was fitting, too, that Williams worked in Papua, homeland of the British ethnographic tradition as developed by A.C. Haddon and C.G. Seligman, and brought to full maturity by Malinowski.

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